



Simple Comforts by TwoPeonies

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Summary: El is scared of thunder. It's a good thing Mike is there to comfort her through the night.

Simple Comforts

The roars of thunder provide Mike no discomfort. Rain drumming on the windows of his bedroom, blasts of light that illuminate the room for only a split second. It's a strange comfort, really, falling asleep to earthly chaos. Especially now, the weight of longing lifted. The unknown acknowledged; the lost found. His eyes fall shut, mind wandering far away from the bed, the room, the house. From Hawkins. The storm a soundtrack to his nightly ventures.

He's brought to full consciousness with a loud bang, his door flung open, having bounced off the wall violently. She stands at the threshold, unmoving.

"El?" He whispers, climbing from under the warmth of his covers. "What are you doing?" She says nothing. "You're going to wake up my parents."

"I'm sorry," she says, voice tinged with distress.

A flash of bright light illuminates her face for a mere moment, tear-stained and red. She jerks at the sound that follows, shuts her eyes. He takes her hand, clammy and trembling, and leads her inside the room. Locks the door, eyebrows knotted with concern.

"El, what's wrong?" He asks, looking into her eyes, dulled by fear and something else he can't place. She shakes her head, mouth twitching.

"Are you scared of the thunder?"

"Yes," she says.

"Do you want me to come downstairs?"

"No."

"Okay, uh," he stutters. "Do you want to stay here?"

She nods.

"Uh, you take the bed." He says, rummaging in his closet for a

blanket. "I'll sleep on the floor."

She trembles as another bout of thunder roars.

"Right here," he says, pointing. "If you look down, you'll see me."

He smiles at her for good measure, tries to be encouraging. But she looks confused, posture unnaturally straight, hands folded on her lap.

"Here," he says, helping to ease her into the bed, one hand resting on the small of her back, the other gripping her shoulder. "It'll be okay, I promise."

Her body relaxes for a moment, but his sense of accomplishment vanishes as soon as another flash of lightning lights up the room. She squeezes her eyes shut, body stiff with fear again.

"Uh, okay." Mike mumbles, lying down next to her, trying to ignore the creaks of the bed, synched with each howl and bang of the storm.

"Mike," she whispers, only a few moments later. "Asleep?"

He turns to look up, her head emerging from above the bed. "Um, no."

"Mike," she repeats, her eyes wide and pleading. She pats the spot next to her on the bed.

"You want me to-?" He starts, then shakes his head. "No, El, I can't."

"Why?" She questions.

"Because it's not right," he says. "It's weird." Girls and boys shouldn't be sleeping together, no matter the circumstances. Not to mention the size of the bed.

El looks confused, and he knows she's eager to ask the reason. She's never been good with social concepts. But another bang of thunder frightens her, and she opens her mouth very slightly to utter, "Please?"

There's only so much Mike can do before he succumbs to her silent

pleading. She's frightened, and already here, in his room. He'll return to his blanket on the floor once she's fallen asleep.

It's not easy fitting both of them in the bed that even Mike has been growing out of. He feels nervous lying next to her in such close proximity, determined not to look into her chocolate-brown eyes. And it's a struggle to fall asleep, though he's quick to remind himself that it's El who needs to fall asleep first. He yearns to comfort her though, to hold her hand, or to press their foreheads together. But that's way out of line and would probably frighten her even more. So he waits, watches how her hands have curled around the blankets, clutching them tighter with every creak and crack outside.

"Mike," she says sometime later. He allows himself to look up into her eyes, an action that makes his stomach flip repeatedly. Inhales sharply when her fingers brush gently against the tops of his cheeks.

"Pretty," she says, her mouth twitching into a smile. "Dots."

"Umm," he whispers. "My freckles?"

"Freckles." El repeats, content.

He watches as her eyes close, as her hands release the blankets, lying limply somewhere in between their bodies. Her rhythmic breathing, the fall and swell of her chest, the small twitches in her face that assure him that she's dreaming. He hopes it's something pleasant. Maybe even about him. That's why he allows himself to fall asleep too, next to her.

"Mike!" Nancy raps on his door, seemingly moments later. "Breakfast!"

His eyes crack open, barely aware of where he is and who he is. They're met with hers, still half-shut, and he suppresses the feeling of panic deep down in his abdomen.

"El," he says, unwrapping her hands from his, albeit dejectedly. "Wake up!"

She doesn't seem pleased to be separated from him, but returns to her stoic self almost immediately. "Eggos?" She asks.

"Yeah, Eggos." Mike says. "But first we need an alibi, because I'm sure Nancy went downstairs to wake you up too."

"Alibi?"

"A false story to avoid revealing guilt."

"Guilt?"

He grimaces, "I'll explain later."

"Okay," she says calmly, unlocking the door and slipping out.

"Eleven, wait!" He yells after her, but it's too late. Walking down the stairs to the dining room is as good as admitting she slept in his room. He avoids going down for breakfast until Nancy comes to get him herself.

"What's wrong with you?" She asks, confused. "Are you sick?"

"What?" He says, "No. I'm fine."

"You missed Eleven telling us how you saved her from the storm," she says, grinning.

His stomach drops.

"And you told me you didn't like her."

"I don't-"

"Friends don't lie," she mimics El, and Mike walks to the dining room table thoroughly embarrassed, his face a deep shade of red. But one look at El eating her breakfast, a content smile on her face, is enough to make it all worth it.

A/N: Couldn't stop myself from writing this. The way El cried when she was sleeping in the Wheeler's basement her first night inspired it. She's so precious! Let me know what you think!